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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2809  
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RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000388

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2029  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [MCAP](#) [AMGT](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA ISSUES ALMOST ALL PENDING DIPLOMATIC  
VISAS

REF: A. CARACAS 00355  
[1](#)B. CARACAS 000252

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Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JOHN CAULFIELD,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. USG protests against harassment of Embassy operations have spurred some MFA action. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) recently issued visas to almost all pending PCS employees, several TDY visas, and pledged to resume issuing all TDY visas. The Venezuelan government also agreed in principle to allow the long-deferred importation of an 8-cylinder Embassy official vehicle. The Charge is urging the MFA to agree to an exchange of diplomatic notes agreeing to the reciprocal issuance of diplomatic visas in the future. Embassy recommends that incoming PCS personnel apply for the visa now and that the Department consider taking reciprocal action at an appropriate time in response to the MFA's refusal to issue a visa to an incoming USAID employee. Embassy also recommends that the Department convene an inter-agency review of the current prohibition on Venezuelan military personnel receiving U.S. flight safety training on civilian aircraft. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials recently assured the Charge that the MFA is issuing all pending visas for Americans waiting to transfer to Embassy Caracas. The Department confirmed on March 24 that the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington approved the visa applications for eight PCS employees and their families, including the Defense Attache and Assistant Air Attache. MFA officials also authorized the BRV Embassy in Washington to issue some TDY visas and reportedly will issue other pending TDY visas. MFA Protocol told the A/DCM March 24 that it does not have higher level authorization to issue any new visas for DEA personnel who are not already at post or to any incoming USAID representatives, however.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In addition, the MFA has agreed in principle to request that Venezuelan customs authorities (SENIAT) authorize the importation of an 8-cylinder armored vehicle for the Mission which has been stuck at a Venezuelan port. The MFA had applied a ban on the importation of 8-cylinder vehicles retroactively on Embassy Caracas, blocking the importation of Embassy armored official vehicles and three 8-cylinder personally-owned vehicles (POVs). These vehicles had already been in port for several months and have accrued thousands of dollars of demurrage to be paid by the USG. MFA officials told us that the 8-cylinder personally-owned vehicles (POVs) at port would not be allowed in, however.

¶4. (C) The MFA appears to have taken the aforementioned actions in response to Washington officials raising Venezuelan harassment of Embassy operations during President Lula's recent visit to Washington. In addition, visiting Representative William Delahunt raised these issues with President Chavez, Foreign Minister Maduro, and other MFA officials during his March 20 visit to Caracas (Ref A). In effort to lock in this recent progress, the Charge has proposed an exchange of notes agreeing to the regular issuance of diplomatic visas on a reciprocal basis. This is particularly important to ensure that critical position are filled at Embassy Caracas during the summer 2010 transfer season (Ref B). In the past, the MFA has cleared up reciprocity issues, only to resume harassment of Embassy operations weeks later.

¶5. (C) In addition, Embassy recommends that the Department consider the following follow-on measures:

- Urging all personnel slated to transfer to Caracas this year to apply for their PCS visas now.
- Taking reciprocal action at an appropriate time in response to the MFA's determination not to issue visas to USAID personnel.
- Convening an inter-agency review to review the prohibition on Venezuelan military personnel receiving flight safety training in the United States on civilian aircraft.

¶6. (S) The USG tightened the interpretation of our ITAR sanctions by barring the training of Venezuelan military personnel in the wake of the GBRV's September 11, 2008, expulsion of the Ambassador. The measure appears to have strengthened anti-American hard-liners within the MFA and spurred the MFA to respond disproportionately by restricting visa issuances to U.S. PCS and TDY personnel. It has also

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significantly diminished our limited access to Venezuelan military personnel to the detriment of broader U.S. interests. These military personnel are also subject to lengthy MANTIS VISA clearances.

CAULFIELD